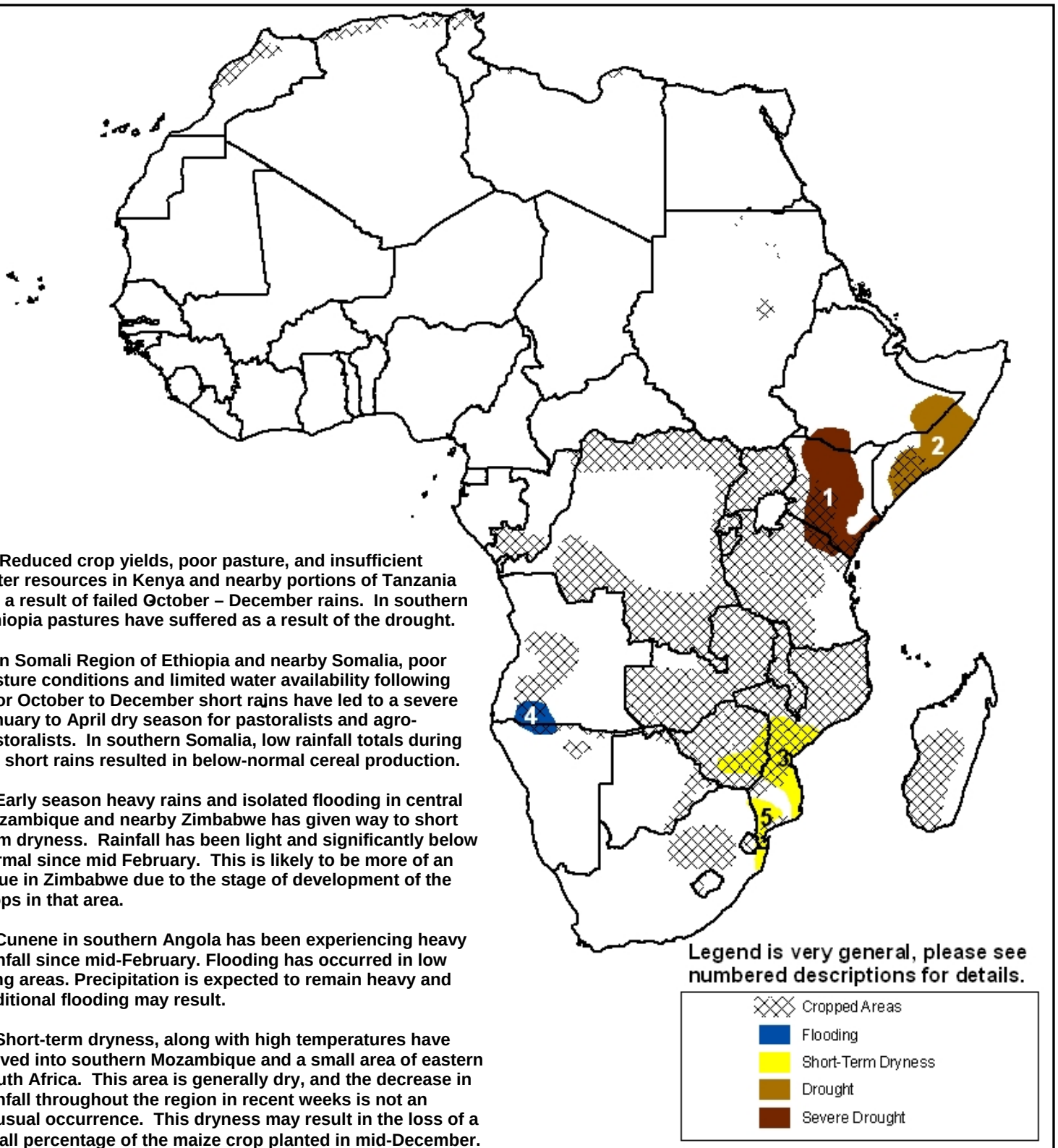
The USAID FEWS NET Weather Hazards Impacts Assessment for Africa
March 6 – 12, 2008

- **Most countries in southern Africa have experienced some degree of flooding thus far this season. The worst of the flooding was concentrated along the Zambezi and Shire rivers, although the Save and Punge Rivers also rose above their banks, damaging localized crops and displacing households. During February rainfall tapered off across most of the region; however, heavy rains remain over southern Angola.**

- **Although the season began well across Botswana and South Africa, during February drier weather moved in and crop conditions appear to be average now. The dry weather also moved into Mozambique and Zimbabwe, where the dry conditions may stress crops that are at a vulnerable stage of their development.**



1) Reduced crop yields, poor pasture, and insufficient water resources in Kenya and nearby portions of Tanzania are a result of failed October – December rains. In southern Ethiopia pastures have suffered as a result of the drought.

2) In Somali Region of Ethiopia and nearby Somalia, poor pasture conditions and limited water availability following poor October to December short rains have led to a severe January to April dry season for pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. In southern Somalia, low rainfall totals during the short rains resulted in below-normal cereal production.

3) Early season heavy rains and isolated flooding in central Mozambique and nearby Zimbabwe has given way to short term dryness. Rainfall has been light and significantly below normal since mid February. This is likely to be more of an issue in Zimbabwe due to the stage of development of the crops in that area.

4) Cunene in southern Angola has been experiencing heavy rainfall since mid-February. Flooding has occurred in low lying areas. Precipitation is expected to remain heavy and additional flooding may result.

5) Short-term dryness, along with high temperatures have moved into southern Mozambique and a small area of eastern South Africa. This area is generally dry, and the decrease in rainfall throughout the region in recent weeks is not an unusual occurrence. This dryness may result in the loss of a small percentage of the maize crop planted in mid-December.

Rainfall eases in southern Africa, has wide range of effects

Rainfall had been heavy across most of southern Africa during the early part of the October to May season. Precipitation eased significantly, however during the last several weeks over most of southern Africa. The lighter rainfall totals has had a variety of results.

The reduced rainfall across central Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the Caprivi Strip has reduced the risk of flooding. These areas had experienced flooding along major rivers and in low lying areas. Less rainfall has resulted in the rivers of the region moving away from flood stage and reducing the stress on dams.

Malawi had also been very wet for the beginning of the season, but beginning in the early part of February rains completely shut off in the southern portion of the country. Rain for the season remains above normal, however there may be localized damage to crops.

When the rains dropped off in the Maize Triangle and Botswana, the region had been experiencing a slightly better than normal season. The reduced precipitation is now making for average conditions.

Southern Mozambique was having a normal season and the drop in rainfall totals has led to short term dryness in the interior areas of Gaza and Maputo Provinces. The short term dryness may impact a small percentage of crops in some localities, but at this time it does not appear that the dry conditions will be a widespread problem. Central Mozambique and nearby portions of Zimbabwe had experienced flooding, but beginning in mid February the rainfall abruptly stopped. This may have occurred at a sensitive stage of crop growth in Zimbabwe, and may have significant ramifications as the season continues. In central Mozambique farmers planted early and have already passed the vulnerable stage of development.

Rain continues to be heavy across northern Mozambique and southwestern Angola. Flooding has been observed in these areas, and forecasts show a continuation of that pattern during the next several weeks.

Madagascar had actually been slightly drier than normal until Cyclone Ivan made landfall on February 16th. Despite the damage from the storm, moisture totals across the island have increased dramatically and are approximately normal at this time. The damage from the winds (estimated at 115 mph with gusts to 140 mph) and heavy rainfall (up to 250 mm, especially along the east coast) have, however, caused damage to infrastructure and crops. The storm also caused human and livestock fatalities across the island.

(See **Figure 1)**

Percent of Normal Rainfall
October 1, 2007 – March 1, 2008

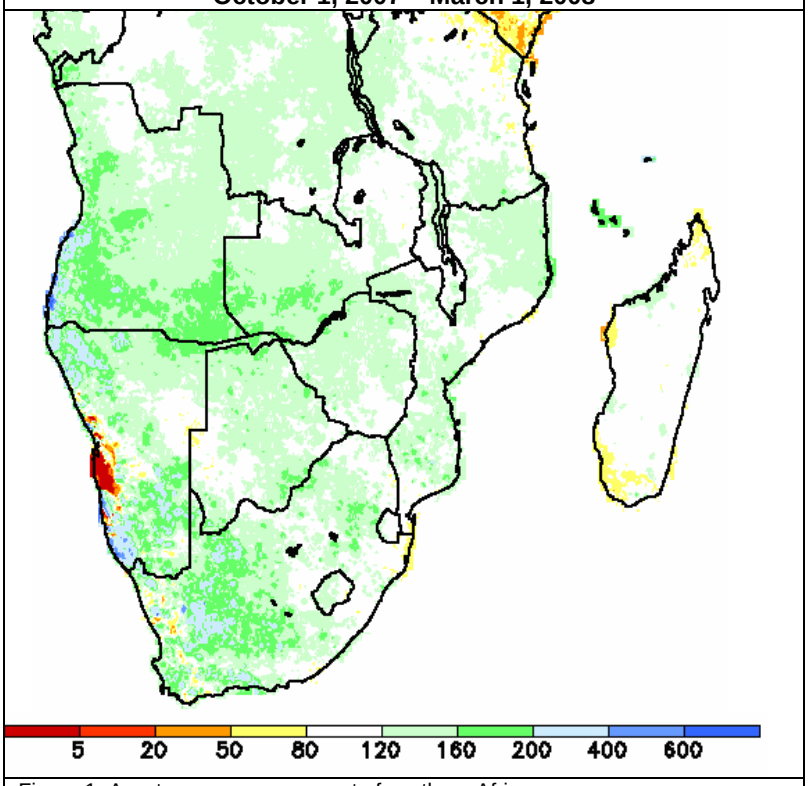


Figure 1: A wet season across most of southern Africa

Source: NOAA

Outlook poor for Horn March to May rains

There is already evidence that the March to May rains may be poor. Preseasonal rainfall, although not critical, has been below normal across Kenya and Ethiopia. If rains improve during early March, crops would have a normal season. However, Ethiopia's National Meteorological Agency has stated that they expect below normal rains in the eastern two thirds of the country and similar warning signs are coming from Djibouti.

If these forecasts prove true, a drier than normal weather pattern would have implications for Kenya and Somalia as well.

(See **Figure 2**)

Rainfall Anomalies
February 1 – March 3

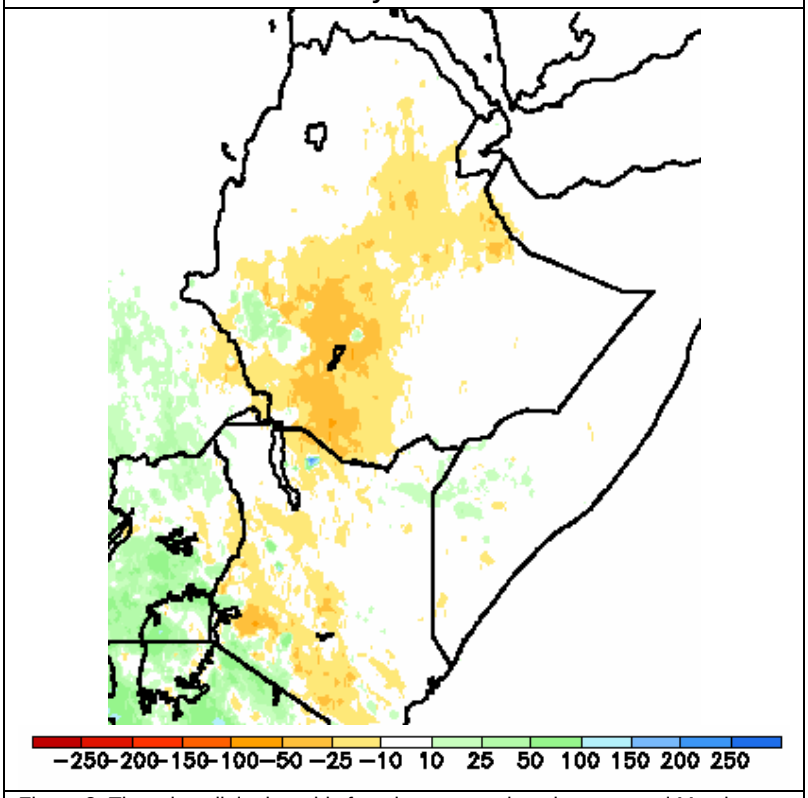


Figure 2: There is a tilt in the odds favoring a normal to above normal March – May season in eastern Africa.

Source: NOAA